

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 2806

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SP

SUBJ: SPANISH INTERNAL SITUATION AS SEEN BY FOREIGN MINISTER

AREILZA

1. DURING MY CONVERSATION MORNING APRIL 10 WITH FOREIGN MINISTER AREILZA, I ASKED FOR HIS COMMENTS ON THE INTERNAL SITUATION. I SAID THAT I WAS CONCERNED THAT OPPOSIT-ION GROUPS BOTH ON THE RIGHT AND THE LEFT WERE BECOMING INCREASINGLY ACTIVE AND CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT. THE GOVERN-MENT GAVE THE IMPRESSION OF A SLOWDOWN IN REFORM MEASURES AS THE CORTES SEEMED TO BE TAKING NO ACTION TO DEBATE AND APPROVE THESE MEASURES, AND IN THE MEANTIME THE GOVERNMENT WAS BEING CAST MORE IN A REPRESSIVE LIGHT. THE PREVIOUS REFORM MOMENTUM SEEMED TO BE SLOWING DOWN.

2. AREILZA SAID THAT THE MAJOR PROBLEM WAS THAT WHILE THE RIGHT AND THE LEFT WERE CREATING POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS OR PARTIES, THE GOVERNMENT HAD NO POLITICAL BASE ON WHICH TO COUNT AND WHICH COULD ACT AS A POINT OF CONTACT WITH OTHER POLITICAL FORMATIONS. HE BELIEVED IT WAS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT THE REFORM ELEMENT IN THE GOVERNMENT (AND HE CITED HERE PARTICULAR- LY MINISTER OF THE PRESIDENCY OSORIO, MINISTER OF SYNDICAL RELATIONS MARTIN VILLA, MINISTER OF THE MOVEMENT SUAREZ, AND JUSTICE MINISTER GARRIGUES) SHOLULD SEEK WITHOUT DELAY TO PUT TOGETHER A POLITICAL PARTY OF THE CENTER WHICH WOULD INCLUDE SOME PEOPLE FROM THE "NATIONAL MOVEMENT" (ALTHOUGH NOT REPRESENTATIVES OF THE "MOVEMENT", CERTAIN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAWE

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(AND HE CITED FOLLOWERS OF OSORIO AND ALVAREZ DE MIRANDA)

AS WELL AS OTHER CENTER ELEMENTS WHO SUPPORTED EFFORTS TO REFORM THE SYSTEM FROM WITHIN THE SYSTEM. HE CONSIDERED IT URGENT THAT SUCH A POLITICAL PARTY BE PUT TOGETHER DURING THE MONTH OF MAY.

3. AREILZA ALSO EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT IT WAS NO LONGER POSSIBLE TO ADHERE TO THE TIMETABLE WHICH FRAGA HAD PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED FOR THE REFERENDEUM IN SETPEMBER-OCTOVER, MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN NOVEMBER AND LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS NEXT YEAR. HE WAS CONVINCED THAT A REFERENDUM SHOULD BE HELD IN JULY COVERING THE REFORM OF THE CORTES AND THE SUCCESSION LAW. THIS THEN WOULD BE FOLLOWED BY LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS IN OCTOBER WITH MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS TAKING PLACE SOME TIME THEREAFTER. IN THIS WAY, THE BASIC REFORMS WOULD HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED IN 1976.

4.ESAREILZA SAID THAT THE MAJOR PROBLEM IN ALL OF THIS WAS PRIME MINISTER ARIAS WHO FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO ADJUST TO THE IDEA OF POLITICAL PARTIES AFL, IN ANY EVENT, WAS NOT A LEADER. THIS WAS CAUSING CONFUSION WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT AND WAS REQUIRING ALL THE EFFORTS OF THE REFORM MINISTERS TO TRY TO PERSUADE HIM TO ACCELERATE THE PROGRAM ALONG THE LINES DESCRIBED BY AREILZA.

5. BEARING IN MIND WHAT FRAGA HAD TOLD ME (MADRID 2645), I ASKED AREILZA WHETHER FRAGA WAS IN AGREEMENT WITH HIS NEW TIMETABLE SINCE I HAD NOTED HIS RECENT STATEMENTS TO CERTAIN FOREIGN NEWSPAPERS SUGGESTING THAT HE STILL ADHERED TO THE PREVIOUS SCHEDULE OF A REFERENDUM IN SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER AND LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS NEXT YEAR. AREILZA WAS QUITE CRITICAL OF FRAGA IN REPLYING TO MY QUESTION. HE SAID THAT FRAGA ENJOYED POWER, LIKED BEING THE STRONG MAN AND HAD CLEAR AMBITION TO SUCCEED ARIAS AS PRIME MINISTER. FRAGA WAS NOW PLAYING THE STRONG MAN FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE ARMY AND THE RIGHT IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THEIR SUPPORT FOR HIM AS THE NEXT PRIME MINISTER. FRAGA'S THINKING WAS IF THE PRESENT SITUATION CONTINUED AND ARIAS TIRED OF HIS POSITION AND RESIGNED, THEN HE (FRAGA) STOOD THE BEST CHANCE OF BECOMING PRIME MINISTER. AREILZA SAID THAT FRAGA WAS BACKING AWAY FROM HIS PREVIOUS SUPPORT FOR A CENTER POLITICAL GROUP TO SUPPORT THE REFORM MINISTERS. (THIS CONFLICTS SOMEWHAT FROM FRAGA'S STATEMENT OT ME THAT AS SOON AS THE POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS LAW IS PASSED, HE WOULD DEVOTE
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MUCH OF HIS TIME TO THE FORMATION OF A CENTER POLITICAL GROUP.)

6. AREILZA TOLD ME THAT THE KING WAS IN FULL AGREEMENT WITH HIS (AREILZA) ACCELERATED REFORM PROGRAM, AND HE STRESSED TO ME HIS DETERMINATION TO PRESS THIS ACCELERATED PROGRAM AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

7. COMMENT: IN SPITE OF ASSERTIONS BY FRAGA THAT HE AND

AREILZA SAW EYE TO EYE, AREILZA'S COMMENTS TO ME CERTAINLY DID NOT REFLECT THIS AGREEMENT. I THINK AREILZA IS JUSTIFIED IN FEELING THAT THE REFORM ELEMENTS IN THE GOVERNMENT MUST RECAPTURE THE INITIATIVE TO OFFSET GROWING OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES, INCREASING DISORDERS AND THE SENSE THAT THE REFORM MOMENTUM HAS BEEN LOST. AT THE SAME TIME, IT IS IMPORTANT TO BEAR IN MIND THAT THERE IS A BUILT-IN RIVALRY BETWEEN AREILZA AND FRAGA FOR THE PROME MINISTRY. THE WAY MATTERS STAND NOW, FRAGA MIGHT STAND A BETTER CHANCE OF SUPPORT BY THE MILITARY AND THE RIGHT, ALTHOUGH IT IS MY GUESS THAT OF THE TWO, THE KING WOULD PREFER AREILZA. THE PROBLEM IS THAT AREILZA DOES NOT HAVE THE BESMPRELATIONS WITH THE MILITARY AND IS LOOKED UPON WITH SUSPICION BY THE ENTRENCHED RIGHT.
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